

**Tompkins County Council of Governments
November 20, 2008**

Approved

Members Present: T/Ithaca – H. Engman
V/Groton - B. Conger
T/Groton - G. Morey
T/Ulysses - D. Austic
T/Dryden - M. Sumner
T/Newfield - R. Dolge
T/Danby – R. Dietrich
V/Lansing - D. Hartill
T/Enfield - F. Podafulski
Tompkins County - M. Koplinka-Loehr

Guests: S. Locey, Locey and Cahill, LLC; C. Nelson; L. Shurtleff, D. Walker, Emergency Planning Committee; M. Lynch, J. Mareane, J. Kippola, County Administration; S. Thayer, City of Ithaca; L. Shawley, Town of Danby

Municipalities Not in Attendance: T/Caroline, V/Cayuga Heights, V/Dryden, V/Trumansburg, V/Freeville, T/Lansing, C/Ithaca

Called to Order

Mr. Austic called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

Tompkins County Emergency Planning Committee (EPC)

Mr. Nelson distributed copies of the Tompkins County Emergency Planning Committee 2009 Goals. She spoke specifically to the public and municipal education outreach goal, and extended an offer to share tools with municipalities for development/incorporation into municipal emergency planning efforts. Ms. Nelson reviewed the organizational structure of the Emergency Planning Committee and said the group wanted to “touch base” with TCCOG and talk about what the expectations of the group are and how information can be communicated back to TCCOG. She welcomed all municipalities to contact her if any information is needed. Mr. Walker, representative of municipalities to the EPC, said he has been attending these meetings and reporting back to the Town of Ithaca Supervisor and Board on activities that have taken place and offered the same to other municipalities. Mr. Shurtleff said all municipalities are encouraged to participate.

Ms. Nelson asked municipalities if they haven’t already done so, to sign their letters for the drug and alcohol consortium for continuation next year. She also said members will soon be receiving information on the bio diesels and alternative fuels consortium. She thanked everyone who has been sending representatives to those meetings.

SMSI Health Insurance Project

Mr. Locey updated TCCOG on activities for the Health Benefits Steering Committee and distributed copies of meeting dates for 2009. He said they are beginning a process of meeting with municipal boards to talk about what the consortium means to them to be a partner. He asked municipal leaders to be looking for a request from them to be on all of the municipal board agendas. He updated TCCOG on where they are in the process and said a majority of the benefit plans have been built and premium-equivalent rates have been developed. He said for those TCCOG members who are not on the Steering Committee, everyone is being asked to send out a renewal when they receive it. In addition to meeting with elected officials and municipal boards the Steering Committee will be meeting with labor unions. They will be building a structure to have a joint labor/management committee in addition to the

board of directors to make sure those involved are being brought together. He spoke of the project manager and said the person who was hired worked for three weeks then accepted another offer and the hiring process has been restarted. Mr. Powers has not received any feedback on the intermunicipal agreement; therefore, he is not in attendance. He asked members to get comments to Mr. Locey, Mr. Powers, or Ms. Kippola, as soon as possible in order to address issues that may exist. In terms of timing, municipalities will not be asked to approve the document until the NYS Insurance Department has approved it. They will be meeting with them in the next couple of weeks to present the document.

Questions were raised about the weighted calculation procedure. Mr. Locey said the weighted voting proposal represents melding two ideas together. First, that there is equal representation for everyone, and secondarily, acknowledgement of the disparity in terms of financial risk by the partners. He said they wanted to make sure everyone has an equal amount of representation so that no one feels disenfranchised from the process and they want the large stakeholders to feel like they have more of a say in the process because they bear a substantial amount more risk than the others. They wanted to make sure that the larger employers felt that they had a reasonable amount of influence over the process without giving them undue influence over the process. It still gives the small employers a certain strength in their voting and also a voice in the process.

Mr. Engman asked if Mr. Locey could factor out current population of employees in respective municipalities and what those votes would be. Mr. Locey will also provide a document showing what the voting structure would look like if each municipality were to participate. Mr. Dietrich asked that meetings with municipalities take place as soon as possible. Mr. Locey explained to Mayor Hartill the benefits for municipalities with small numbers of employees of joining the Consortium, stating even though there are very few employees, the small municipalities will see a significant reduction in current costs. Municipalities should also see more stability in the fluctuation in premiums from year-to-year and more options will be available as well. Comments are not due until the end of December on the cooperative agreement. Municipalities will be asked to pass a resolution in July stating their acceptance of the municipal cooperative agreement. The target date for implementation is January 1, 2010.

Sales Tax Resolution

Mr. Mareane said under State Law, counties are able to have a local sales tax up to three percent, anything above that has to be reauthorized every two years. The resolution presented is for information purposes only; this is a request for reauthorization of the additional one percent that is currently before the County Legislature. The Legislature wanted all municipalities to know that discussion and action is underway to renew this additional one percent and the Legislature welcomes TCCOG members to communicate of a comments or concerns.

Membership of TCCOG

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr communicated a requested he received from the Ithaca City School District to join TCCOG. Ms. Sumner asked why they wished to join; Mr. Koplinka-Loehr said there are issues of common concern. Mr. Koplinka-Loehr said if considering a specific school district, consideration should be given to all school districts. Mr. Dolge said he thinks it is too early in the creation of TCCOG to amend the membership of TCCOG. Mr. Dietrich said he thinks taxing entities are going to be severely tested over the next few years and it would be to everyone's advantage for all involved bodies, including school districts, to talk about how to proceed. Ms. Conger said this is the Council of Governments and schools are not municipal governing bodies. Ms. Robertson said she sees value in bringing school representatives to the table at least for the communication benefits. She said there could be benefits attained from opening a dialogue with the School District because she thinks there is a big disconnect between taxing jurisdictions. A request will be made for the Ithaca School District member to attend the next meeting.

TCCOG reviewed attendance by members at meetings; no action was taken.

**RESOLUTION NO. 004-08 – CALLING ON THE GOVERNOR AND STATE
LEGISLATURE TO END THE PRACTICE OF PASSING
COSTS FOR STATE PROGRAMS TO LOCAL AND
COUNTY GOVERNMENTS**

MOVED by Tompkins County (Robertson), seconded by Town of Ithaca (Engman), and unanimously adopted by members present.

WHEREAS, the financial services sector is a significant component of New York State's economy, contributing 20% of all tax revenues received by New York State; and

WHEREAS, there has been a significant contraction within the financial services sector over the past six months as the result of various events in the credit market and which has contributed to a general economic slowdown in the nation and throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, the State of New York has suffered a significant fiscal impact as the result of both the specific matter of the contraction of the financial services sector and the general national economies; and

WHEREAS, the State of New York has projected a budget gap of up to \$2.5 billion in 2008-09 and \$12.5 billion in 2009-10; and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) is a coalition of all municipal and county governments within Tompkins County; and

WHEREAS, TCCOG supports aggressive action to address the fiscal challenges facing the State; and

WHEREAS, TCCOG is concerned that proposals may rise during the State budget debate that would not represent sustainable spending reductions, but would instead simply shift costs associated with mandated services from the State to local governments, causing local governments to either raise property taxes or reduce essential local services; and

WHEREAS, TCCOG believes the local property tax burden throughout New York State is already the highest in the nation largely because of the proliferation of unfunded mandates and the similar burden shifts and cost allocations that have been made over the course of time by New York State; and

WHEREAS, TCCOG believes further cost shifting resulting in higher local property taxes will result in hardship for homeowners on fixed and moderate incomes, deter economic development, and contribute to financial stresses that have already resulted in growing numbers of tax and mortgage foreclosures; NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Tompkins County Council of Governments hereby opposes any plan that would result in a shift from the State to local government of any costs associated with programs mandated by the State; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Tompkins County Council of Governments calls upon Governor David Patterson and the members of the New York State Legislature to refrain from any action that would result in such shifts of cost from the State to local governments.

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Approval of Minutes of September 25 and October 23, 2008

It was MOVED by the T/Danby (Dietrich), seconded by the Town of Drdyen (Sumner), and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of September 25 and October 23, 2008. MINUTES APPROVED.

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Next Meeting

A request was made by TCCOG for the Highway Manager, Bill Sczsney, to attend the next meeting and present a report on snow plowing of roads.

The December meeting was canceled. The organizational meeting will be January 22nd.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office